

## **THE CLAIMS**

What is claimed is:

1. A method of presenting a commercial in a time slot to a viewer, the method comprising the steps of:

providing one or more commercials to a receiver operatively coupled with a display device, each commercial having an agent associated therewith, the agent for each commercial configured to place a bid for the time slot on behalf of the associated commercial, the bid including a reward component to be granted to the viewer if the associated commercial is selected;

5 auctioning the time slot to the one or more commercials provided to the receiver; selecting the commercial having the agent which placed a winning bid; and  
10 displaying the selected commercial on the display device during the time slot.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

rewarding the viewer with the reward component of the winning bid.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

storing information related to the commercial having the agent which placed the winning bid in a vault.

4. The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of:

allowing the agent for at least one commercial to access information previously stored in the vault, the agent using the accessed information to determine the bid to be placed for the time slot.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

maintaining a profile database to store data related to local viewer preferences; and

allowing the agent for at least one commercial to access the local viewer preference related data in the profile database, the agent using the accessed local viewer preference related data to determine the bid to be placed for the time slot.

5 The method of claim 5, wherein the local viewer preference related data maintained by the maintaining step identifies units preferred by the viewer for the reward component, and the agent determines the units for the reward component of the bid to be placed based upon the viewer preference related data.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the bid placed by the agent of at least one commercial is a fixed amount.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the winning bid is chosen as the bid having the highest value in units preferred by the viewer.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the winning bid selected by the selecting step is determined by setting a desired value in units preferred by the viewer, and then reducing the desired value until the agent of at least one commercial places a bid at least equal to the desired value.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the providing step includes loading at least one commercial and the agent associated therewith onto the receiver prior to the time slot.

11. A system for presenting a commercial in a time slot to a viewer, said system comprising:

at least one source of one or more commercials, the source providing each said commercial having an agent associated therewith, the agent for each commercial configured

5 to place a bid for the time slot on behalf of the associated commercial, the bid including a reward component to be granted to the viewer if the associated commercial is selected;

a receiver operatively coupled with a display device, said receiver configured to receive each commercial and associated agent; and

10 a processor operatively coupled with the receiver, the processor capable of executing instructions encoded by the agent associated with each commercial to determine the bid to be placed for the time slot;

auctioning the time slot to the one or more commercials provided to the receiver;

15 selecting the commercial having the agent which placed a winning bid; and displaying the selected commercial on the display device during the time slot.

12. The system of claim 11, wherein the processor is further capable of rewarding the viewer with the reward component of the winning bid.

13. The system of claim 11, further comprising:

a vault operatively coupled with the processor for storing information related to the commercial having the agent which placed the winning bid.

14. The system of claim 13, wherein the processor is further capable of allowing each agent for at least one commercial to access information previously stored in the vault, the agent using the accessed information to determine the bid to be placed for the time slot.

15. The system of claim 11, further comprising:

a profile database operatively coupled with the processor to store data related to local viewer preferences; and

5 further wherein the processor is capable of allowing the agent for at least one commercial to access the local viewer preference related data in the profile database, the agent using the accessed local viewer preference related data to determine the bid to be placed for the time slot.

16. The system of claim 15, wherein the local viewer preference related data maintained by the maintaining step identifies units preferred by the viewer for the reward component, and the agent determines the units for the reward component of the bid to be placed based upon the viewer preference related data.

17. The system of claim 11, further comprising:

memory operatively coupled with the receiver, the source providing at least one commercial and the agent associated therewith onto the memory prior to the time slot.

18. A method of presenting a commercial in a time slot to a viewer, the method comprising the steps of:

providing one or more commercials to a receiver operatively coupled with a display device, each commercial having an agent associated therewith, the agent for each 5 commercial configured to place a bid for the time slot on behalf of the associated commercial, the bid including a reward component to be granted to the viewer if the associated commercial is selected;

10 maintaining a profile database to store data related to local viewer preferences, the local viewer preference related data including units preferred by the viewer for the reward component;

allowing the agent for at least one commercial to access the local viewer preference related data in the profile database, the agent using the accessed local viewer preference related data to determine the bid to be placed for the time slot;

15 auctioning the time slot to the one or more commercials provided to the receiver; selecting the commercial having the agent which placed a winning bid; displaying the selected commercial on the display device during the time slot; rewarding the viewer with the reward component of the winning bid; and storing information related to the commercial having the agent which placed the winning bid in a vault.